THE PARTY AND THE POET IN THE USSR / MAURICE FRIEDBERG

On the cover: Vladimir Mayakovsky (1893-1930), "the poet of the Russian Revolution," champion of the oppressed, sworn enemy of all those who exploit others. At the age of 12 he became actively engaged in revolutionary causes; at 15 he was arrested and jailed a year for helping to run an underground Bolshevik press; at 17 he published his first revolutionary poem. At 37, badgered, it is said, by increasing pressure to make him toe the line of Party orthodoxy, Mayakovsky shot himself. Design from a woodcut by Yuri Mogilevsky.

The Party and the Poet in the USSR

by Maurice Friedberg

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CONTENTS

	Introduction	1
I:	Before and During Stalin's Rule	3
II:	The Thaw	9
III:	How Much Terror?	11
IV:	The Two Tendencies	13
V:	In Defense of Private Life	16
VI:	The Conflict of the Generations	19
VII:	Illegal Literature	24
VIII:	The Role of the Writer	26
IX:	Conclusion—A Return to the Past?	28

Introduction

To many who observed, or directly felt, the warming effects of the post-Stalin "thaw" in the Soviet Union, one of the most heartening developments was the emergence of a new literary and artistic movement, a liberal community whose members—painters, sculptors, composers, and especially writers—had a sense of cohesion and mission; a hunger for freedom from the mental as well as the political constriction of the Stalinist past; a zeal which produced poems and paintings which, however uneven in the strict artistic sense, were fresh, lively, and forthright.

Another characteristic, of the new poets in particular—distinguishing them from their predecessors of the Stalin era and also their "orthodox" contemporaries—was their enormous visibility and popularity. Their books sold out almost before the printers' ink was dry; their public readings attracted huge and fervent crowds of young people. These radiant young poets, with their wry, poignant verses, were the heroes of the new post-Stalin generation in the Soviet Union. By 1960, some of them, such as Yevgeny Yevtushenko and Andrei Voznesensky, were well known in literary circles far beyond the borders of their country. But not all of the liberal community were young; among the most active exponents of freedom, diversity, and "speaking out" were the veteran (72 year-old) Soviet literary figure Ilya Ehrenburg and Alexander Tvardovsky (53), poet and editor of the liberal group's main organ, the magazine Novy Mir *(New World).*

To many, this upsurge of artistic vitality, particularly in literature (historically the leading art in Russia), held out more promise for the direction of the future development of Soviet society than all the Soviet space feats or the somewhat dubious claims of increases in the production of consumer goods. But when, on December 1, 1962 Soviet Premier Nikita Khrushchev paid a visit to an exhibition of abstract painting in Moscow's Manège Hall and erupted in a frenzy of rage and indignation, a chill descended on the Soviet art world and its well-wishers abroad. Almost immediately, a closed meeting of the Party Central Committee with some 400 artists, composers, and writers followed. Leonid Ilyichev, the watchdog of Party orthodoxy, head of the ideological commission of the Central Committee, made two declarations urging and warning artists and writers to get back into line.

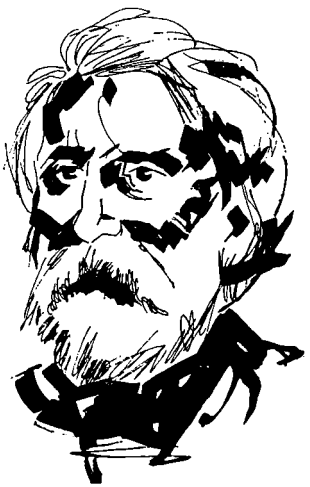
Then, on March 8, 1963 Khrushchev made a major speech in which he reviewed the trends in all the Soviet arts—and found them not to his liking.

While pessimism, extremism, "formalism" (which includes abstractionism and in its strict sense means an excessive preoccupation with style over content in works of art) were the stated crimes, what Khrushchev was really charging the writers and artists with was lèse majesté*—with encroaching on territory still occupied by the Party. In this speech Khrushchev was serving notice to them that the Party is still in charge—it is the Party, not the intelligentsia, which is in charge of de-Stalinization, in charge of culture, in charge of every aspect of Soviet society—the Party will continue to lay down a line and to expect conformity to that line.*

"The Party," Khrushchev said, "will not, I repeat, will not *let anyone blunt or weaken the strength of its effectiveness. In questions of art, the Central Committee will demand from everyone—the most merited and renowned as well as from budding young artists—complete and unswerving adherence to the Party line." The denunciation of "the cult of personality" [Stalin] does not mean that "the reins of government have been relaxed, that the ship of society is sailing where the waves carry it, and that everyone is free to do and behave as he pleases."*

He severely reprimanded two of the leading figures of the liberal group, Ehrenburg and Yevtushenko, for violating the Party line in matters of substance. By advocating "peaceful coexistence of all trends in art," Ehrenburg was guilty of sliding towards an outright "anti-Communist position." Also, in his memoirs published in Novy Mir, *Ehrenburg made the contention that many (including himself) knew that Stalin was purging innocent people, but kept silent. The Party line is that the people (and, of course, the Party hierarchy of which Khrushchev was then a member) trusted Stalin and did not question the justice of the purges. Yevtushenko was accused of distorting and exaggerating the "Jewish question" in his poem* Babi Yar. *According to the Party line, there is no "Jewish question" in the Soviet Union. Yevtushenko had further sinned by coming out in defense of abstract art and in general adopting a far too independent and supercilious attitude towards the Party cultural commissars, whom he once called "cultured mice."*

This attack was clearly more than an attack of spleen on the part of a tempermental "boss." Did it mean the beginning of a new era—or rather, more ominously, return to an old, the grim era of Stalinism?



TURGENEV

I: Before and During Stalin's Rule

NOT TOO DISSIMILAR EVENTS have become regular features of Soviet literary life since the 1930's. A casual reader of the stenographic accounts of the First Congress of the Union of Soviet Writers in 1934 and of the Party decrees on literature, collected in the compilation *O partiinoi i sovetskoi pechati* (On the Party and Soviet Press), printed in 1954, would be surprised to discover that the great majority of these problems have been discussed in the USSR for the past 30 years.

It can safely be asserted that at present there is no country in the world where literature receives as much public attention as in the USSR. Literary polemics are frequently first-page news in the general press; a goodly number of periodicals are devoted exclusively to literature; government leaders follow literary developments and on occasion make their own weighty contribution; and literature benefits from huge state subsidies. Soviet writers are often awarded high decorations and receive very handsome royalties;

many of them are, in fact, among the richest people in the Soviet Union. The number of new works of fiction published annually is impressive by any standards.

And yet in the 45 years of the Communist regime, as even the three-volume 2200-page official history of Soviet literature (Moscow, 1948-61) demonstrates, Soviet writers failed to make a significant contribution to world literature. The great bulk of Soviet writing is decidedly of inferior literary quality, in spite of the several distinguished writers and some important works. The future historian of Russian literature will undoubtedly consider the years 1918-63 a period of decline of Russian letters. They compare unfavorably with the first years of the present century—the years of the Symbolists and "pure" literature, the so-called "Silver Age" of Russian literature. They are markedly inferior in their achievements to the latter part of the 19th century—the era of the great novelists and dramatists, of Tolstoy, Dostoyevsky, Turgenev, Ostrovsky, Gogol and Chekhov. And they cannot compare with the early 19th century, the "Golden Age of Russian poetry," the age of Pushkin and Lermontov.

Not only have the Soviet writers failed to create a large body of writing of lasting literary value; they have also not succeeded in creating a body of popular literature that is even of passing interest, works comparable to the European and American best-sellers, books that will be forgotten within a few years but are nevertheless avidly read when first published.

In short, the bulk of Soviet literature consists of works that are drab, colorless, tedious; works characterized by an artificial psychology of heroes and predictable outcomes of conflicts; works that do not please even the most undemanding readers; works that do not live up to the standard promulgated years ago by Dostoyevsky—"the best book, no matter what kind of book it is. . . , is the interesting book."

And yet there was a period when Soviet literature showed great promise, when it produced splendid specimens of experimentation in the literary form, when it was the object of study and admiration by many foreign connoisseurs of *belles lettres*. This period was the 1920's.

The first months after the Bolshevik *coup d'état* of November 7, 1917 appeared to signal the end of the "Silver Age" of Russian literature. Many famous writers emigrated to Western Europe. Some of them—Maxim Gorky, Alexei Tolstoy, Ilya Ehrenburg, Alexander Kuprin, Marina Tsvetayeva—eventually returned, unable to live and create far from their country and their readers. In others, these considerations were outweighed by animosity toward the new regime, and they preferred to remain abroad. This group included the only Russian before Boris Pasternak to be awarded the Nobel Prize for literature, Ivan Bunin, as well as Leonid Andreyev, Dmitry Merezhkovsky, Zinaida Gippius, Mark Aldanov, Vasily Rozanov, Alexei Remizov, and Vyacheslav Ivanov.

The writers who remained in Russia were, by and large, unsympathetic to the Soviet regime. Indeed, with the exception of the poets Vladimir

Mayakovsky and Valery Bryusov, the authorities could count only on the cooperation of a number of second-rate writers and literary bohemians. Nevertheless, soon after the establishment of the Soviet regime literary activities were resumed. The Communist authorities, too preoccupied with the Civil War, the famine, and the problem of consolidation of power, did not interfere with the *littérateurs*, provided the latter restricted themselves to problems of art and did not engage in counterrevolutionary activity. The censorship, which was established immediately after the Communist seizure of power, was to ensure that this principle be strictly observed. The office of the censor, known as the *Glavlit*, continues to exist in 1963, the censor's number appearing on each book—this in spite of the assurances voiced in 1918 that the imposition of censorship was only a temporary measure, and that it would be abolished as soon as conditions returned to normal.

Otherwise, in the 1920's the writers were left to themselves to continue their literary polemics, some of which were begun long before. And the polemics were extremely embittered. There were those writers who defended the continuation of the old literary traditions, and those who insisted that the new times demanded new songs. There were poets who preached the perpetuation of the time-honored Russian syllabo-tonic verse, and there were the Futurists—Mayakovsky belonged to this group for a time—and some poets who even came close to the Western Dadaists.

There were writers who demanded a new lease on life for the philanthropic traditions of Russian literature—the tradition of Pushkin's *Bronze Horseman*, Gogol's *Overcoat*, Turgenev's *Sportsman's Sketches*, Dostoyevsky's *Poor Folk*, and the tales of Chekhov—the literature which championed the cause of the individual in his frequently hopeless struggle against society; and there were those who insisted that art must actively help the cause of the proletarian revolution, even if this social upheaval resulted in violence to the rights of the individual. There were those men of letters who wanted to bring Russia's glorious literary heritage to her still largely illiterate masses, and there were those who maintained that the workers and peasants need proletarian art rather than products of a feudal and bourgeois culture.

The dominant theme of Soviet literature in the 1920's was the struggle of the old and the new Russias—not only on the political, but also the cultural, social, and moral planes. It was clear by then that the new Russia was to emerge victorious. And yet, in the relatively free intellectual climate of the 1920's, a Soviet writer could suggest that this victory was a Pyrrhic one, that the Communist millennium is to be achieved at the price of great human misery, and he could even, on occasion, express doubts about the desirability of the victory itself.

Concurrently with the appearance of *belles lettres*, the 1920's gave rise to two schools of literary criticism. Of these, one was characterized by the sociological Marxist approach which regarded literature primarily as a vehicle for political ideas. The other school, usually referred to as the Formalist, emphasized the investigation of the literary form, of linguistic

and stylistic devices. The Formalists brought out a number of splendid studies, which foreshadowed in many respects the later Western New Criticism.

Not unlike Khrushchev's semi-neutrality *vis à vis* the "conservatives" and "liberals" in Soviet literature of the late 1950's, in the 1920's the Communist Party maintained a noncommittal position with regard to the various "proletarian" and "bourgeois" groupings in Soviet letters. The latter consisted, for the most part, of so-called fellow travellers, a term coined by the then still powerful Leon Trotsky in his *Literature and the Revolution,* and the hostile camps coexisted more or less peacefully. It should be noted that the non-Communists had at their disposal at this time a large number of privately-owned publishing houses which printed books defending divergent points of view, except, of course, those that would be banned by the censorship as presenting a clear and present danger to the Soviet Government.

By the end of the 1920's, however, it appeared in spite of the 1925 declaration by the Central Committee of the Communist Party, which promised equal treatment to all the literary groupings, one militantly Communist group, the Russian Association of Proletarian Writers, known as RAPP, began, with the connivance of the authorities, to intimidate its rivals. The leader of RAPP, Leopold Averbakh, preached a doctrine of "planned" literature dealing with timely topics of Socialist construction. For inspiration, writers were sent to construction sites, not infrequently in teams: as in other areas of endeavor, better results were expected from collective work. RAPP declared quite openly that the purpose of this literature was not so much to create works of art, as to generate enthusiasm for the first five-year plan.

It soon became evident that the RAPP experiment was a failure. The works brought out by its members were remarkably uniform; the plots were monotonous; and the situations frequently differed only in their settings. Most of the plays and novels dealt with the building of a particular factory, a railroad, or with the establishment of a collective farm in a tradition-ridden Russian village. The main characters were usually an upright Communist and an enemy of the Soviet regime. The former would be a simple worker, or a young engineer, or a newly-emancipated woman. The latter would in most cases be a *kulak*—a comparatively prosperous farmer—or a reactionary member of the old intelligentsia, a clergyman, or a surviving officer of the Imperial Army. The heroes were white, and the villains black. At the end of a typical novel or drama, the attempts to sabotage the task of Socialist construction would meet with dismal failure, and the work would end on a happy note.

In 1932, the Party's Central Committee ordered that RAPP—as well as all the other literary groupings—be disbanded in favor of a single organization of all Soviet men of letters, the Union of Soviet Writers. The dissolution of the unpopular RAPP was at first welcomed in many quarters as a liberal step, and the First Congress of the Union of Soviet Writers in

1934 was marked by enthusiasm and great expectations. Subsequent developments, however, demonstrated that in establishing a single organization of all writers the Party pursued a somewhat different aim, namely the establishment of a system of strict controls over all the writers of the USSR, such control having been impossible as long as there were several competing literary groups.

The creation of the Union of Soviet Writers in 1934 coincided with the disappearance of the last privately-owned publishing houses. Henceforth, a writer in the Soviet Union could belong to the sole literary organization, or belong to none; his works could appear under the imprimatur of the Soviet State, or not appear at all. This situation has remained unchanged to the present day.

In the late 1930's, the Party's grip on literature was somewhat loosened. Those were the years of the ever-growing Nazi menace, of the "popular front" abroad, and, in a sense, at home. In an effort to rally all anti-Fascist forces in the face of the impending danger, the Party began to look with favor on the Russian patriotic sentiments of a large segment of the population. In Soviet literature, the late 1930's were marked by the reappearance of the historical novel, lyric poetry, and a great revival of the classics of Russian literature of the 19th century.

The liberalization of the State's literary policy was carried further during World War II. Once again, the Party was too busy with the country's very survival and could not devote much attention to literature. During this period, Soviet literature sang of arms and men, and many works written during the war won for themselves tremendous popularity at home and even a degree of recognition abroad.

With the end of the war the Party decided to put an end to the ideological laxity which was particularly noticeable between 1943 and 1944. The 1946 decrees of the Central Committee led to bellicose Communist orthodoxy and a reign of terror. Writers and critics who were insufficiently militant were denounced as "apolitical." Those who timidly suggested that literature must also be concerned with esthetic values were branded "formalist." Novelists and poets who believed that any foreign literature has—or had even in the distant past—anything to offer Russia were condemned as "rootless cosmopolitans" and accused of "criminal servility to the capitalist West." Soviet men of letters were exhorted to join in the cold war effort.

At no time has the quality of Soviet writing been as low as in the years 1947 to 1953. As Mikhail Sholokhov, considered by many the USSR's finest novelist, admitted in his speech at the Second Congress of the Union of Soviet Writers on December 27, 1954, "a gray stream of pale, mediocre literature has gushed from our magazines and flooded the book market." This was *not* due to the fact that most of the works published dealt with collective farms and factories and heroes were tractor drivers and shock workers. The deadeningly dull quality of these works, such as Vasily Azhayev's *Far from Moscow* or Pyotr Pavlenko's *Happiness,* was due to

the false psychology of their heroes and the intolerable didacticism of their plots.

The Soviet book market in the late 1940's and the early 1950's was thus devoid of good new literature, and millions of Soviet readers turned to the only alternative—the classics of Western and prerevolutionary Russian literature.

The last years of Stalin's rule saw the intensification of a Soviet practice begun in the 1930's—that of rewriting some of the better-known novels, poems and plays to bring them into conformity with the current ideological and artistic policies of the Communist Party. Works expressing political and esthetic moods of bygone years had to be altered in order to deprive Soviet citizenry of historical perspective which might become embarrassing or even dangerous to the authorities if applied by the citizenry to evaluate the events around them. The rewriting of *belles lettres* for political purposes is not an exception, but a rule in Soviet literature. It is noteworthy that since Stalin's death the fact that a new edition of a novel in a revised version is frequently indicated on the title page of the book. No such formalities were observed in earlier years. Under Khrushchev there have also been several cases of "restoration"—sometimes only partial—of the work's original version. This process is linked with the "rehabilitation" of certain events and personages in Soviet history. As a result, Nikolai Virta's *Loneliness,* which had been rewritten once before in order to delete all the laudatory references to Marshal Tukhachevsky, who had in the meantime been declared an "enemy of the people," was rewritten again after Tukhachevsky's "rehabilitation." Sholokhov's *Silent Don,* which deals with the Civil War, has been rewritten several times.

EHRENBURG

II: The Thaw

THE ATMOSPHERE OF FEAR which characterized the Soviet Union during the last years of Stalin's rule was evident in all spheres of life. But nowhere was its impact as depressing as in Soviet culture. It is therefore quite significant that the first important document of post-Stalin "liberalization" in literature, Ilya Ehrenburg's novella *The Thaw*, was a protest against the regimentation of the arts. *The Thaw* contrasts two painters, one a hack who produces canvasses dealing with the "approved" themes of labor heroism, and the other a true artist, whose independence and integrity are acquired at the price of poverty and ostracism. It is interesting to note that Ehrenburg returned to this theme several years later, at the very end of the first post-Stalin "thaw," in his articles on Stendhal, where a skillful selection of quotations from the French novelist was used to indict those who would restrict the freedom of artistic creation.

Once again, the relaxation of controls over literature was permitted to develop because the authorities were too busy with the problems of the embittered intra-Party struggle for power, with the rapidly changing conditions on the international scene, and with the country's economic difficulties, to concern themselves with poets and essayists.

The symbolism of the "thaw" and the "dawn" became very popular among Soviet writers after the dictator's death, and particularly after Khrushchev's denunciation of the evils of Stalinism. It was particularly favored by the poets—Semyon Kirsanov, Leonid Martynov, Robert Rozhdestvensky, and Margarita Aliger. In fact, one of the first works of Pasternak after a silence of many years was entitled *The Dawn.*

But it is also possible that some of the Soviet writers saw a different symbolism in the "thaw" in the Soviet Union. For the thaw is, after all, not only the messenger of renascent life; it may also be a symbol of truth emerging from under the cover of the majestic lies and beautiful pretenses of the winter. The melting white snow will ultimately make way for grass, and flowers, and new life, but at first it will also bring into the open the dirt and decay of the old life.

Such an interpretation of the "thaw" symbol appears to have guided the critic Pomerantsev, whose article "On Sincerity in Literature" was

one of the milestones in post-Stalin Soviet letters. Pomerantsev accused Soviet writers of inventing artificial plots, surroundings, and heroes, and singled out these characteristics of their works as the major cause of the postwar decline of Soviet writing. The falsehood of Soviet literature of the preceding years was subsequently admitted by many of the writers themselves. Thus, in Lyubov Kabo's novella *On A Difficult March*, a protagonist described a Stalin-prize novel dealing with life on collective farms as being so false that "I could not read it—it made me sick. . . . Writers get sentimental, they pour saccharine into their books; it is repulsive to read." Even such an obedient servant of the Party as the poet Alexei Surkov, then the head of the Union of Soviet Writers, admitted in a foreword to his *Old Field Notebook*, which was brought out in 1957, that during the early period of the war he had lied in his writings, that he had tried to conceal in his works the defeatism that prevailed in the Army, writing instead about an imaginary patriotic exuberance.

One by one, Soviet writers rose between 1955 and 1957 to renounce the "beautiful lies" of the Stalinist period of Soviet literature and to demolish Soviet literature's myth of a happy Socialist land inhabited by enthusiastic and strong men and women. To be sure, these writers still pretended that the unseemly sides of Soviet reality were but anachronistic relics of the past, bound to disappear very shortly. But the collective picture of the Soviet Union emerging from these works was nevertheless a frightening one, not too different from that described by the poet Lermontov more than a century earlier—"the land of slaves and the land of masters, the land of blue uniforms and obedient people."

L. Zorin's *The Guests* and Vladimir Dudintsev's *Not by Bread Alone*, which was to achieve international renown and become a *cause célèbre* in Russia, showed the Soviet Union as a country dominated by soulless bureaucrats, who stifle mercilessly any attempt at independent activity by Soviet citizens—even if this activity could prove highly beneficial to the State. Emmanuil Kazakevich's *A House on the Square* and N. Alekseyev's *The Heirs* depicted bureaucracy, and the fear of Party superiors in the military milieu.

III: How Much Terror?

ENCOURAGED BY KHRUSHCHEV'S DENUNCIATION of Stalin's crimes in his memorable speech at the 20th Party Congress in 1956, some Soviet writers attempted to lift the veil of secrecy from a theme that was hitherto of necessity a monopoly of *émigré* Russian writers and which for years was dismissed as a malicious fabrication even by many Western critics—the theme of Soviet police teror. However, just as in the case of Khrushchev's speech, the truth revealed by the Soviet writers was only a partial one. The only wave of terror mentioned in 1954-57 was that of 1937-38, and the only victims—"honest Communists." Non-Communist victims of Stalin's terror—particularly the multitude of peasants arrested and exiled during the collectivization drive—began to appear in Soviet fiction somewhat later; a typical treatment of the theme may be found in *Men Are Not Angels,* a 1962 novella by Ivan Stadnyuk. Needless to say, no Soviet writer has so far shown any concern for victims of Stalin's justice who were persecuted for their anti-Communist convictions, as these writers frequently do for Communists who suffer for their beliefs in some parts of the non-Soviet world.

But whereas the institution of police terror can, at least in theory, be abolished by a governmental decree, the scars left on the souls of Soviet citizenry by the decades of animal fear and of totalitarian thought-control would not, even under ideal conditions, heal overnight. That is why it appears that works such as Yevgeny Yevtushenko's *Zima Station,* Semyon Kirsanov's *Seven Days of the Week,* Alexander Yashin's *Levers,* Margarita Aliger's *The Most Important,* and Daniil Granin's *One's Own Opinion* are of far greater significance as human documents, though not necessarily as literature, than the works that merely describe the physical sufferings brought to the country by Stalin's terror.

The protagonists of Yevtushenko's poem who drink to forget; the characters in Yashin's story who are attractive people in their daily lives but who change into automatons, into "levers" approving all decisions from "above" whenever they act as a collective; Aliger's Soviet men and women whose physical works are great, but whose souls are petty, corroded as they are by greed and disloyalty; and Granin's pathetic engineer who comes to the frightening realization that years of extreme caution have changed him into a despicable coward—they all corroborate the alarming declaration of the poet Kirsanov that the Soviet system, like God in the Book of Genesis, has left the creation of Man to the very end. And this, Kirsanov

suggests, results in a disregard bordering on contempt for human values in a world that boasts of tremendous material strides. Nevertheless, Kirsanov appears optimistic: even though the creation of Man has been assigned, so to speak, the lowest priority in the construction plans, even though the real Man has not yet been created, when he does appear, he will prove to be Nature's crowning achievement.

Needless to say, the Communist Party eyed this type of literature suspiciously. It remembered only too well that similar ferment among novelists and poets foreshadowed the Gomulka *coup d'état* in Poland and, worse still, the revolution in Hungary. In 1957, Khrushchev held a number of conferences with Soviet writers in an effort to bring them back into line. The campaign against "revisionism" that followed was mild by previous Soviet standards. It was limited to threats (Khrushchev is reputed to have told the writers that, if necessary, the Party's "hand will not tremble") and an embittered campaign in the press; but no police measures have been applied to the rebels. There have been several cases of expulsion from the Party, the Young Communist League, and the Union of Soviet Writers—Pasternak's is the best-known case—which in the USSR is practically tantamount to a banishment from the writing profession, and some of the accused writers were forced to recant. Thus the poetess Aliger, who is reputed to have fainted when Khrushchev threatened assembled writers with reprisals, declared in 1957:

> I committed a number of gross mistakes in my public work. . . . I must now be much more demanding of myself. . . . All the work of a Soviet writer is political, and one may carry out this work with honor only when one follows unswervingly the Party's policies and submits to Party discipline.

There have also been some attempts to counter "revisionism" in *belles lettres* with orthodox Party-line *belles lettres* rather than, as has hitherto been the case, with Party-inspired literary criticism. Vsevolod Kochetov's *Brothers Yershov,* an "anti-revisionist" novel and an "answer" to Dudintsev's *Not By Bread Alone,* launched this type of polemical literature.

IV: The Two Tendencies

BEGINNING WITH 1958-59, Soviet literature became—in fact, even if not in theory—divided into "liberal" and "reactionary" camps. The "liberals" included Ehrenburg, Paustovsky, Nikolai Aseyev and most of the young authors who had been recently upbraided for real or alleged "revisionist" sympathies; they were identified with the newspaper of the Union of Soviet Writers, *Literaturnaya Gazeta,* and with the monthly *Novy Mir* (New World). The standard-bearers of the "reactionaries" were Kochetov, Sofronov, Yermilov, Sobolev and Surkov; their publications were the recently suspended *Literatura i Zhizn* (Literature and Life) and the monthlies *Oktyabr* (October) and *Don.*

No attempt shall be made here to discuss the more numerous works of the politically orthodox writers. Suffice it to point out that, as in Stalin's days, they glorified hard labor, devotion to the Party and its ideology, subjugation of personal interests to those of the State, and so forth. In other words, they continued to display the familiar traits of eighteenth-century neo-classical literature with its idealized, noble heroes, despicable villains, obeisance to the omniscient and omnipotent reigning monarch and the State religion—not excluding even the *deus ex machina* denouements. True, on occasion the "orthodox" Soviet writers would be mildly critical of the dead dictator or of some secondary feature of Soviet life. This was caused by the fact that since the late 1950's, as the "liberal" poet Yevtushenko aptly put it, "it was prudent to be daring." Thus, Kochetov's 1962 novel *Secretary of the District Party Committee,* which, among other things, also contains a vicious lampoon of Yevtushenko, denounces an old-time "Stalinist" Party functionary, contrasting him with an upright Party official of the new Khrushchevian variety. Similarly, the evils of Stalinism were described in Galina Nikolayeva's *Battle on the Way* and M. Zhestev's *Tatyana Tarkhanova;* the former tells of general police terror under Stalin, while the latter includes scenes of deportation to Siberia of innocent peasants during the period of forcible collectivization of agriculture. But there was a difference between the "conservative" and the "liberal" portrayals of Stalinism. The first group explicitly treated Stalinism as a temporary, even if unpleasant, aberration from the noble ideas of

Leninism which did not in the least affect the basic wisdom of the Party's policies that were to bring ultimately to a happy end all of the temporary "distortions" and "misunderstandings." The "liberals" tended to mention the beneficent role of the Party only parenthetically or not at all, and on occasion would come dangerously close to suggesting that the evil fruits of Stalinism were borne not in spite of, but as a result of, the Party's policies. This caused the "Stalinist" poet Nikolai Gribachov to complain that the Union of Soviet Writers "twines laurel wreaths for those who make sly digs at the Soviet system."

From the artistic point of view, the "liberals" were by far the better writers. As the poet and editor of *Novy Mir* Alexander Tvardovsky (himself a moderate "liberal") declared at the 22nd Party Congress in October 1961, among the typical "conservative" *literati*:

> There are some who think that to be "a helper of the Party" means merely to go along with the Party, "using literary media" to illustrate the various proposals of the Party, the tasks it defines in economy and production. In practice it works out something like this: "The bright rays of the setting sun were still painting with gold the tops of the birch trees around the cottages of *The Path to Communism* collective farm, when Grunya, the milkmaid, having calculated all the factors, resolved to obtain from her cows x liters of milk above the quota required by her commitments."

The 1957 storm safely over, in 1958-62 "liberal" writers continued to tackle a number of themes characteristic of the earlier "thaw," though in a more outspoken and sophisticated manner. Thus, for example, the theme of the Second World War continued to attract numerous writers. But war was no longer represented as a saga of unrelieved sacrifice, heroism and victories as it had been during the war and last years of Stalin's life. It would be an exaggeration to liken these Soviet works to such pacifist classics as Erich-Marie Remarque's *All Quiet on the Western Front* or Ernest Hemingway's *Farewell to Arms*. They do, however, bear some likeness to Tolstoy's *Sebastopol Tales* in their emphasis on "personal" rather than "official" military experience, their attempts at psychological analysis, their attention to such problems as boredom and loneliness and their willingness to deal with such unpleasant problems as military incompetence of the Army's leaders, as well as with cowardice and defeat. Very characteristic in this respect is Konstantin Simonov's novel *The Living and the Dead* which depicts the early period of the war, i.e. the period of Soviet defeats which had up to now been avoided by Soviet writers. Simonov describes how at that time the Soviet armies retreated in disorder and panic from the onslaughts of superior German forces. It is very instructive to compare *The Living and the Dead* with the same author's wartime novel *Days and Nights* where a spirit of optimism prevails. As for heroism, it is shown in many of the works that appeared between 1958 and 1962 in the same endearing manner as in the well-known recent Soviet film *The Ballad of a*

Soldier, in which a young soldier, scared to death, almost inadvertently knocks out several enemy tanks, and is then surprised when a general declares him a hero. Such, for example, is the portrayal of courage in Bulat Okudzhava's *Good Luck, Schoolboy.*

Grimly truthful descriptions of the poverty and drabness of life in the Soviet countryside had already began to make their appearance in the first years following Stalin's death. Such works as Vladimir Tendryakov's *The Downfall of Ivan Chuprov* (1955) and Nikolai Zhdanov's *Journey Home* (1957) belied the pastoral visions of the Soviet village assiduously cultivated by Stalin's court poets. In the years 1958-63 numerous Soviet writers returned to the theme of that most neglected class of the Soviet society, the peasants. Alexander Yashin, whose *Levers* was mentioned earlier, wrote a fascinating tale entitled *Wedding in Vologda,* which was officially criticized for its clear implication that the nearly half a century of Soviet rule has done little to change life in a village in North European Russia. Old customs and lore prevail; the standard of living is not much higher than before the Revolution; and if it were not for a few trucks (though no paved roads) one would have difficulty guessing that this is a picture of a rural community in the 1960's. The visitor from the city (i.e. the author) is shown visibly shaken by the experience, as were also the narrators in earlier works of Zhdanov and Yevtushenko treating the same theme. Alexander Solzhenitsyn's *Matryona's Hut* describes the unbelievable destitution of an old widow in a Soviet village. An old woman who is forced to steal peat to keep her delapidated, cockroach-infested house warm; her emaciated goat and her lame cat; her monotonous diet of cereal and potatoes; her greedy beast-like relatives—all these could have appeared, without any major modifications, in a work by a 19th century Russian radical writer. The compassionate, indignant portrait of the old peasant woman is reminiscent of pages from an old volume of Nikolai Nekrasov or Leo Tolstoy. Some Soviet writers have thus returned to the traditions of their prerevolutionary predecessors, the "repentent noblemen" obsessed with guilt for the miserable existence of the Russian peasantry.

The lonely, misunderstood (or, as one would say in the West, "alienated") painter who refuses to trade his artistic integrity for a mess of pottage had already been depicted by Ehrenburg in *The Thaw.* A similar figure reappeared recently in *Adam and Eve,* a story by the highly promising young writer Yuri Kazakov.

PASTERNAK

V: In Defense of Private Life

IN 1958-63, literary attacks on Stalin and Stalinism mounted in intensity, particularly after the Twenty-Second Congress of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union in October 1961 at which the decision was taken to remove Stalin's body from the mausoleum on the Red Square. So powerful were many writers' feelings of revulsion and guilt with regard to the person and the cruel practices of the dead autocrat, that the conservative critic Yakov Elsberg was actually expelled from the Union of Soviet Writers for having served, in Stalin's times, as a voluntary police informer whose reports sent many an innocent writer to prison and death. Among the numerous works exposing Stalinist brutality there were some that had been written during the previous dictator's lifetime but could not then, of course, be made public. These included two allegorical plays by Yevgeny Shvarts, *The Naked King* and *The Dragon*, both masquerading as fairy tales based on Hans Christian Andersen's motifs. Other works on similar themes included Victor Nekrasov's *Kira Georgievna*, which shows an elderly artist and his much younger wife, herself a sculptor, whose cozy and sterile

lives are shaken by the return from a concentration camp of the woman's first husband, a victim of the purges; and Vadim Kozhevnikov's novella *The Fleeting Day*, which describes how people were persecuted under Stalin merely because of their class origins (rather than political allegiances) or on the basis of false denunciations. An interesting psychological twist is found in Leonid Pervomaisky's *Wild Honey*, of which only an excerpt has appeared so far. Pervomaisky confronts the innocent victim's widow with the man who had arrested him. To complicate the melodrama further, the former policeman turns out to have been once the dead man's friend. He now wrestles with his conscience: is he to be absolved of guilt, having been, merely an obedient tool of the authorities? The problem must be far from uncommon in the USSR; it would also have a familiar ring to many a former Nazi.

Scenes of life in Stalin's concentration camps could be found in several works published during the period under review but the greatest literary and political sensation of the last several years was, no doubt, the appearance in the November 1962 issue of *Novy Mir* of Alexander Solzhenitsyn's *One Day in the Life of Ivan Denisovich*. The book, as Khrushchev has subsequently admitted, was read by himself and a number of other Soviet leaders before it was "cleared" for publication. Solzhenitsyn, himself a veteran of a labor camp, portrays a gallery of inmates of different nationalities and social backgrounds—almost all of them, be it noted, arrested on trumped-up charges—enduring cold, hunger, illness, hard labor and harassment by the police in a sub-Arctic camp. The central protagonist is a Russian peasant, but among his fellow-prisoners one also finds intellectuals, army officers, Ukrainians, Estonians, and Baptists. All these innocent men are condemned to suffer and die by the suspicious, paranoic tyrant in the Kremlin.

A question may arise: why was this seemingly dangerous book permitted to appear, while Pasternak's outwardly less anti-Soviet *Doctor Zhivago* remains banned to this day? Careful reading of the two books reveals that *One Day in the Life of Ivan Denisovich*—and other Soviet books touching on the subject of police terror and concentration camps—are *not* anti-Soviet. On the contrary, they were—temporarily, at least—useful to Khrushchev's regime. True, these books demonstrated that Nazi-like camps (minus gas ovens) had existed in the USSR. But this was no news to most Soviet readers. On the contrary, the fact that their existence had been exposed and condemned with the Party's explicit approval, suggested that such camps are to be abolished. More important, in Solzhenitsyn's and similar books the inmate, in spite of his undeserved martyrdom, does not for a moment really question the validity of the Soviet system of government. His basic acceptance of the Soviet State remains unimpaired by his suffering. There may be complaints, but never do we see any sign of rebellion. This is the one false note in Solzhenitsyn's book—and also probably one of the major reasons why the book was published with the blessings of the authorities. Little wonder, therefore, that after the appearance of

One Day in the Life of Ivan Denisovich Khrushchev, aware of the likelihood that the theme of life in Soviet prisons would attract many writers, warned that the subject is a "delicate" one.

Pasternak's *Doctor Zhivago* is, to all appearances, less "dangerous." It contains very few explicitly anti-Soviet statements and unattractive portrayals of Soviet reality. Pasternak's, however, is a profoundly "subversive" book because it demonstrates that the destinies of a human individual are infinitely more important than the fate of *any* political movement, the Communist included, and that man can live without *any* ideology; and because Pasternak voices the one accusation against Communism which cannot easily be refuted: that Communism refuses to accept Man as he is, but regards him instead as raw material to be molded into its own preconceived image.

An important recent motif of Soviet literature is that of the persistence of Stalinism in Russia, in spite of Khrushchev's "de-Stalinization" efforts. In Samuil Alyoshin's play *The Hospital Ward* an old Stalinist bureaucrat is shown longing for the good old days when Soviet people could simply be bullied, when it was not necessary to reason with them. Significantly, the Stalinist is shown recovering from his illness and returning to his job—as did the Stalinist bureaucrat a few years earlier in Dudintsev's *Not By Bread Alone.* Yevtushenko's poem *Stalin's Heirs* (published in *Pravda,* i.e., with the Party's official imprimatur at a time when Khrushchev was eager to completely disavow Stalinism; had the poem been published in one of the literary monthlies instead, one could speak only of the Party's acquiescence) warned that while Stalin himself is dead, Stalinists are very much alive and dream of return to power.

Post-Stalin works by "liberal" writers, particularly the dramatists, devote much attention to the private lives of Soviet men and women, as distinct from their public roles as workers, citizens and Party members. The recently deceased playwright Nikolai Pogodin published in 1956 *Petrarch's Sonnet* in which he described an illicit love relationship between a middle-aged married man and a much younger woman. Naturally, they soon become the object of hatred and gossip; he is expelled from the Party and she from the Young Communist League. Pogodin's drama is a plea for a man's right to retain at least one area of privacy in one's life, even if all the others must remain subjected to public and Party scrutiny.

Proceeding from what is to them an axiomatic assumption, namely that the psychology of the new Soviet man is basically different from that of his "bourgeois" counterparts, Soviet political leaders are fond of periodically asserting that some of the least attractive features of mankind—say, laziness, greed, selfishness—are not universal human traits, but mere aberrations of unhealthy social relationships which exist in the West, and cannot therefore exist in the USSR. Since, however, all can see that these traits *do* exist in the USSR, they are officially known as "bourgeois survivals in human mentality," i.e., as archaic and anachronistic features that will soon disappear.

VOZNESENSKY

VI: The Conflict of the Generations

IN HIS SPEECH ON March 8, 1963, Khrushchev declared that, unlike in the capitalist world, in the USSR there is not, nor could there be, any conflict between the values of the older and younger generations or, as the Russians call it since the appearance of Ivan Turgenev's novel a century ago, between "fathers" and "sons." However, it would be strange indeed if such a conflict did not exist, and there is overwhelming evidence that it does. In fact, Khrushchev's assertions to the contrary, the regime tacitly recognizes that Soviet society is not exempt from universal social laws and that the young people in the USSR, in particular the generation that has only dim memories of World War II and Stalin, espouse different values and have different aspirations from those of their elders. To cater to these interests and channel them in a desirable direction, a periodical called *Yunost* (Youth) was established a few years ago, while a special radio station of the same name was inaugurated on October 15, 1962.

Intended by the Party as a safety valve for the pressures of grievances of the young, *Yunost* surprised its government sponsors by the extent and intensity of the youth's alienation from and rebellion against the values and the ethos of the older generation. This was clearly apparent from the contents of the literary works of the journal's youthful contributors. Deeply disturbed, the authorities hastily replaced the magazine's relatively liberal editor Valentin Katayev with the Party stalwart Boris Polevoi, author of the classic Stalinist novel *The Story of a Real Man*—the same Polevoi who had, a few years previous to his appointment, brazenly lied to Howard Fast, then a Communist and the most widely read American author in the USSR, about the fate of the Soviet Jewish writers who, as was learned later, had been executed as early as 1952. Yet, in spite of Polevoi's appointment, *Yunost* continued to reflect the restlessness of Russia's new generation. As Nikolai Gogol pointed out in the epigraph to *The Inspector General*, his immortal comedy, *na zerkalo nechego penyat' kol' rozha kriva*—"don't blame the mirror if your mug is crooked." The unpleasant (to the Party) revelations in the pages of *Yunost* were not the fault of the journal's first editor.

Turgenev's *Fathers and Sons* is to be credited not only with coining the Russian appellation for the conflict of generations. In the same novel Turgenev created also the term "nihilist" which was meant to label young men who, while profoundly dissatisfied with the values of their society, have no clear notion of an alternative set of beliefs, and resort to a cynical disrespect of everything their fathers hold sacred, rejection of all parental guidance, and a stubborn determination to, as Nietzsche put it, "re-evaluate all values."

Among the recent works of fiction concerned with the young Soviet "nihilists" Vasily Aksyonov's *Ticket to the Stars* is the most widely known. But similar motifs of conflict between generations can also be found in the two plays of Victor Rozov, *Unequal Struggle* and *A,B,C,D,E;* in Oleg Stukalov's *Wide Open Windows*; and in Vera Panova's *How Are Things, Fellow?*. In Daniil Granin's novel *I Walk Into the Storm* a young engineer defends abstract painting—not because he himself particularly likes it, but because he steadfastly believes that Soviet people should be given an opportunity to see it and make up their own minds about its merits—the opportunity that Khrushchev would deny his subjects, now that he has excommunicated abstract painting *ex cathedra* during his December 1962 visit to an art exhibit. In Vyacheslav Palman's short story *The Skirmish* a son leaves in disgust the house of his father who, in spite of being a brave army officer, is also an intolerant petty tyrant who imposes his views on those close to him. Very similar is Nina Ivanter's novella *It Is August Again*: a son disowns his father after discovering that during the purges in the 1930's the latter had denounced to the police a close personal friend. Aimless drifting of a cynical and disillusioned young worker is shown in Aksyonov's *Halfway to the Moon*, while in the same author's novella *The Colleagues* a young protagonist says:

> I am sick and tired of all this grandiloquence, all these pompous pronouncements! One hears them not only from many noble idealists, but also from thousands of scoundrels. . . . I am responsible to my conscience alone. . . . All they do, is prevent me from seeing life as it really is.

Many young people in the USSR are groping for answers to basic problems of their lives because they are convinced that their elders cannot offer them much useful advice. Very indicative in this respect is a letter written by a young Russian writer V. Konetsky to his French translator in Paris. Konetsky emphasizes that the older generation of Soviet writers was numbed by Stalin's terror while the young one is free—thus implying that free men cannot learn much from former slaves.

That the young generation cannot count on the experience of the previous generation in solving its problems was also broadly hinted in the as yet unreleased films *Zastava Ilyicha* (Lenin's Sentry) in which a young man sees the shadow of his father who was killed during the war: the father tells the boy that he died even younger than his son is now. This, incidentally, was warmly praised by the novelist Nekrasov who expressed his gratitude to the makers of the film for *not* showing for once a gray-haired old worker who customarily knows all the answers in Soviet films and books. It is highly revealing that the very same scene in the film was severely attacked by Khrushchev, who saw in it a pernicious appeal to the young to dispense with the leadership of their elders—i.e., the Party.

Why were the ideologically "harmful" books printed at all, and why were similar plays staged in the theaters? This query cannot be explained merely by the assertion that Soviet publishers, editors and producers are often in sympathy with the unorthodox writers. On the contrary, Soviet literary administrators tend to be more conservative and conformist than the authors they publish or produce. By no stretch of imagination could Polevoi, the editor of the troublesome youth magazine, be called a "liberal." Very frequently the decision to publish ideologically dubious works and to produce similar plays on the stage is motivated by the simple vulgar "capitalist" desire to make money. Like other commercial enterprises, Soviet publishing firms, journals and theaters are under pressure from the Soviet authorities to show a financial profit, and therefore Soviet literary and theatrical managers are often tempted to cater to the public's real tastes. And it should be stressed that the unorthodox Soviet writers sell unusually well: one hundred thousand advance orders for *The Triangular Pear,* an anthology of verse by the highly gifted and very unconventional poet Andrei Voznesensky, were received two months before the book's publication, while the same number of copies of a collection of Yevtushenko's poems was sold out within two days of its appearance in bookstores. The dilemma of whether to make available better-quality literature, thus satisfying public demand and, not least important, showing a financial profit, or to preserve, instead, pristine Communist ideological purity, is one that always haunts Soviet cultural authorities. If one were to follow literally the political demands voiced by the Party, it would be no exaggeration to predict that the arts

would all but cease to exist in the USSR, degenerating into Communist advertising copy for which there would not be much public demand. It is highly indicative that the acclaimed classic of Soviet literature, Mikhail Sholokhov's *Silent Don*, violates practically all of the canons of Socialist Realism: it has no really "positive" hero, no optimistic ending, etc. On the other hand, one cannot be merely responsive to the Soviet public's taste: the Party requires that these tastes be created and directed to the desired sort of reading fare. The importance of the problem was acknowledged by the establishment, in the summer of 1963, of a special organization to regulate the output of Soviet publishing houses. The organization has the status of a full-fledged ministry, and is headed by the former chief censor of foreign correspondents stationed in the USSR.

The desire to cater to the public's taste is also a very powerful stimulus for the mass publication of foreign and prerevolutionary Russian literature. (There are, of course, other significant factors behind this; for one, the Soviet government's desire to appear before the world at large and its own citizenry as an enlightened protector of the arts and, particularly, a patron of *belles lettres*.) These books are either ideologically "neutral" or somewhat harmful: after all, books written by non-Soviet authors are almost inevitably carriers of non-Soviet ideology. There are, of course, some non-Soviet books that could be politically useful to the Soviet State—books that demonstrate to the Soviet reader that life in prerevolutionary Russia was, and, infinitely more important, in the contemporary West still is—characterized by economic deprivations, social injustices and spiritual poverty. Soviet literary criticism is doing its utmost to magnify the political usefulness of such books and to minimize the potential harm of the others by providing Soviet readers with introductions, commentaries and footnotes which would help him to draw "desirable" conclusions from the reading of non-Soviet books. The importance of this can hardly be overestimated, since works by non-Soviet authors are published in hundreds of millions of copies annually and occupy an important place in the repertory of the Soviet stage. In the last several years Soviet publishers have also been printing an increasing number of works by contemporary Afro-Asian and Latin-American authors, with strong emphasis on those among them which describe the evils of Western colonialism, racial discrimination and economic exploitation. The Soviet authorities' intent is quite transparent. They wish to demonstrate to the Soviet citizen that though life in the USSR may still leave much to be desired, it is nevertheless infinitely preferable to conditions prevailing outside the Soviet bloc.

Even some of the anti-Communist Russian émigré writers (though, to be sure, none of those still alive) have been "amnestied" since the mid-1950's. Most notable among these are Ivan Shmelyov and Ivan Bunin, whose compassionate descriptions of life in prerevolutionary Russia (but not, of

course, their anti-Soviet works) were republished. Bunin's works, in fact, were brought out in a multi-volume set. The more lenient attitude toward the Russian past benefited also to an extent some of the Soviet writers neglected or, unofficially but effectively, banned during the latter years of the Stalin era—men like Yuri Olesha, Isaac Babel and Mikhail Zoshchenko (the humorist's tales, incidentally, were printed in bowdlerized versions mercilessly mutilated by the Soviet censorship). One of the oldest—and finest—of the living Soviet poets, Anna Akhmatova (who, together with Zoshchenko, was one of the chief victims of the postwar "Zhdanov" purges and has remained in ostracism for years) had a slim volume of her verse published; there was obscene irony in the fact that the book was supplied with a laudatory postscript by one of the most notoriously militant Stalinists in Soviet literature, the poet and literary bureaucrat Alexei Surkov. Some of the hitherto proscribed Russian poets of the "modernist" school of the beginning of this century—such as the émigré Marina Tsvetayeva, who had committed suicide shortly after her return to the USSR, and Velemir Khlebnikov—appeared in print again, though in highly selective compilations (in the Khlebnikov anthology, for example, his Futurist verse, which constitutes his claim to fame, was altogether omitted). Even Pasternak's verse (though not *Doctor Zhivago*) was brought out. But the "amnesty" did not affect all of the damned souls on the Soviet literary Parnassus. At least three major literary victims of the Soviet police terror—the novelist Boris Pilnyak and the poets Nikolai Gumilyov and Osip Mandelshtam—were not "rehabilitated." Neither was Yevgeny Zamyatin, a Soviet forerunner of Orwell and Huxley, the Cassandra of the Bolshevik revolution, who died in exile abroad.

YEVTUSHENKO

VII: Illegal Literature

"ILLEGAL" LITERATURE has a long and noble tradition in Russia, a country which in its entire history enjoyed exactly eight months of unrestricted freedom of expression—from March to November of 1917, i.e., during the tenure of the Provisional Government. In the 19th century, illegal Russian literature was either published abroad (e.g., some of Mikhail Saltykov-Shchedrin's satirical works had to be printed in Switzerland) or was circulated in manuscript form (e.g., Alexander Radishchev's radically reformist *Journey from St. Petersburg to Moscow*, originally brought out in 1790, or the critic Vissarion Belinsky's famous letter to Gogol). The tradition is very much alive today.

Among the works by living Soviet authors published in recent years abroad because they could not be printed at home, the best known is Pasternak's *Doctor Zhivago*; the author died shortly thereafter. Incidentally, numerous other works of his appeared in many languages, including a three-

volume scholarly edition of his writings in the original Russian brought out in the United States. Other "illegal" authors, published in Europe and America in Russian and in translations, include Ivan Valery Tarsis (*The Bluebottle*); Alexander Yesenin-Volpin (son of the famous Soviet poet Sergei Yesenin who committed suicide in 1925; *A Leaf of Spring*, a volume of verse and essays); Mikhail Naritsa (real name Narymov; *The Unfinished Story*); Nikolai Arzhak (*This Is Moscow Speaking*); I. Ivanov (*Is There Life on Mars?*); and the most prolific of them all, Abram Tertz (the novel *The Trial Begins*, *The Fantastic Tales* and the long essay *What is Socialist Realism?*).

The story of Pasternak's ordeal is well known. Of the remaining authors, three (Naritsa, Yesenin-Volpin and Tarsis) are now in Soviet insane asylums—a "humane" method of dealing with political dissenters practiced in Russia since long before the Revolution. Such was, for example, the fate of the poet Pyotr Chaadayev, a friend of Pushkin, whose ideas the Tsar found unpalatable. So far, the Soviet authorities have failed to discover the identities of Ivanov, Arzhak, and Tertz.

It is noteworthy that the "illegal" works are less politically-minded than one would expect them to be. This demonstrates that, by publishing their works abroad, the "underground" Soviet authors were yearning not merely for liberty to express their political views, but also for the artistic freedom to experiment with style and language, a freedom still denied Soviet writers by the rigid strictures of Socialist Realism.

A borderline category of "semi-legal," i.e., unauthorized, works, consists of Yevtushenko's recently condemned autobiography which was printed in the French periodical *L'Express* without having been read in advance by the appropriate authorities in the USSR, and an anthology of essays, poetry and prose called *Pages of Tarusa* which, edited by the veteran novelist Konstantin Paustovsky, was printed in Russia without the required "clearance" from the Soviet censorship office.

Finally, there are the anonymous works circulated in the Soviet Union in manuscript, either individually or as collections of works by several authors. The Soviet press has reported several such cases since 1954. The publications bore challenging names—*Heresy*, *Syntax*, *Fig Leaf*.

VIII: The Role of the Writer

THE SOVIET PARTY and the Soviet *literati* both believe that the writer has a responsibility to society, but the two "camps" are in fundamental disagreement about the exact nature of that responsibility, and how it is to be met. The role of the writer and artist, as the regime sees it and as it was stated by Khrushchev in his March 8 speech, is "to be in the ranks of the builders of communism, to serve by his talent the great cause of our Party . . . to contribute actively, through his works, to the assertion of Communist ideas, to strike crushing blows at the enemies of socialism and communism, to struggle against the imperialists and colonialists. . . ."

But what, in the opinion of the Soviet authors themselves, is the proper role for the creative writer in Soviet society? Let it be emphasized at the beginning that many of them think of themselves only as the Party's emissaries who happen to have been assigned to the "literary front"; these men subscribe—whether sincerely or through opportunism—to the notion of literature's purely utilitarian function. But there are also others, those who cherish the notion of an autonomy of letters, those who believe in literature *qua* literature, to whom artistic considerations are of paramount importance, and who view literature as a means of spiritual and esthetic enrichment, rather than merely of ideological education. These writers have of late been quite eloquent. Thus, the elder statesman of Russian literary criticism Kornei Chukovsky sounded the alarm on several occasions regarding the dangerous corruption of the Russian language, not only in its popular usage, but even in *belles lettres*. The poet Andrei Voznesensky pleaded against many writers' patronizing attitude toward the masses: "The people whom we serve do not need a lowering of esthetic standards."

In September 1962 the scholarly journal *Voprosy Literatury* (Problems of Literature) published a number of pronouncements on literature by several young writers. Vasily Aksyonov enumerated his "teachers." These included Tolstoy, Chekhov, Babel, as well as Hemingway, Faulkner, Böll and Salinger; it is curious that, with the exception of the ideologically ambiguous Babel, no Soviet writer of the older generation was mentioned. Voznesensky declared that, in his view, "The main task of modern literature is that of deeper insight into the soul of man, into the interior of consciousness"; he did not as much as hint at literature's social function. The short story writer Yuri Nagibin stated his belief in "the tradition of honesty with myself and the reader"—also an apolitical position. Perhaps most eloquent were the comments of Yuri Kazakov:

> Happiness and its nature, suffering and how to overcome it, moral duty to the people, love, the attainment of self-understanding, attitudes to work, the vitality of basic instincts—these are some of the problems which occupy me.

It is noteworthy that even more radically un-Soviet views are held by

at least some members of the young intelligentsia. Thus, the students at the Riga Faculty of Letters asserted that:

> First of all . . . the writer must be talented. What he writes about does not matter. The most important thing is to be modern; the truth of life is an outdated concept. Ideological content [the principle of *ideinost'*, a cornerstone of the doctrine of Socialist Realism—MF] is not at all the main point in artistic creation.

Shortly after Khrushchev's attack on abstract art in December 1962, a number of prominent figures in the Soviet artistic world, sensing the dangerous implications of the Premier's remarks, addressed a letter to him. The letter was signed by the writers Simonov and Ehrenburg, the painters Favorsky and Konenkov, the well-known cinema director Romm and the world-famous composer Shostakovich. It read in part:

> Unless a variety of artistic trends can exist, art is doomed. . . . We now see how artists who have followed a single trend—the only trend which flourished under Stalin and which did not permit others to work or even to live—are beginning to interpret what you said at the exhibition. . . . We ask you to stop this return to past methods which are contrary to the whole spirit of our times.

KAZAKOV

IX: Conclusion—A Return to the Past?

AT THE HEART OF THE CONFLICT between the liberal intelligentsia and the Party leadership are the different constructions put on the concepts of "peaceful coexistence" and "de-Stalinization," the two "liberalizing" innovations identified with Khrushchev's regime. Khrushchev launched "de-Stalinization" as a means partly of popularizing his own rule but basically in order to modernize Soviet society, which had been effectively paralyzed by years of police terror, economic bureaucratization, and the "Iron Curtain" (isolation). But far from reducing the authority of the Party, "de-Stalinization" was intended to strengthen it, and especially in the realm of ideology. And now, when the policies of the Soviet Party leadership are under the most strenuous attack from the Chinese Communist leadership and its "camp," Khrushchev is at pains to assert the CPSU's "Marxist-Leninist" purity and militancy. "Peaceful coexistence" is a strategy of international diplomacy, and has nothing to do with variety and freedom in internal Soviet intellectual life—on the contrary, the new Party program makes clear that the necessary corollary of coexistence is an intensification of the ideological struggle with the West. To paint in the abstract style is still, as it was in the Stalin era, to open a door to the hostile and decadent "bourgeois ideology" of the West.

Any notion entertained by the authors of the petition, and Western intellectuals, that Khrushchev's past permissiveness about art—his conciliatory speech at the 1959 Congress of the Union of Soviet Writers, his professions of humility regarding his competence to judge artistic problems—meant that the Party was moderating its authority in the field of art and literature has been dispelled. In May, the Pravda publishing house issued a book which puts Khrushchev in the role of the authoritative interpreter of Marxist-Leninist theory on art. It includes every speech and statement made by Khrushchev on this subject going back for years, which constitutes a body of dogma "giving a profound grounding and development to the most important problems of Leninist policy in the realms of literature and art in the contemporary conditions of full-scale Communist construction." This is reminiscent indeed of Stalin, who wrote books and issued statements on

subjects on which he had no substantive, only "Marxist-Leninist", knowledge, such as science, and these works constituted the Final Authority on the subject.

The current crackdown cannot really have come as a great surprise to the Soviet writers—men like Ehrenburg and Tvardovsky can have few illusions about the independence of art in the Soviet Union. The reactions and repercussions among Communist leaderships elsewhere in the Sino-Soviet bloc and outside it have been varied, but in most cases consistent with the general line or position of these Parties in other ideological matters—that is, Stalinist (conservative, dogmatic) to "revisionist" (permissive, independent).

The reaction of the Communist Chinese and their "camp" has been to condemn the state of chaos into which the new group of Soviet artists and writers has led Soviet cultural life, to blame Khrushchev and his "revisionism" for this untoward development, and to regard his crackdown as futile and even hypocritical. At a national conference of writers and artists held in May 1963 in China, speakers alluded to the Soviet "new wave" as "the phenomenon of degeneracy to be found in the art and literature of [certain] Socialist countries." In the Albanian press—often the main mouthpiece of the Chinese anti-Khrushchev campaign—the May 7 issue of *Drita* (Tirana), organ of the Albanian Writers and Artists Union, carried an 8,000-word article on the cultural ferment in the Soviet Union which charged that the course of cultural liberalization followed by Khrushchev "and his minions" has progressed to a point where their current efforts to put a brake on it now are either a useless attempt or really just a "demagogical" pretense: the gist of it is that Khrushchev, by launching "de-Stalinization" in the Soviet Union, asked for the trouble he now has with the writers and artists. This was followed by a critical review of present day Soviet literary personalities, above all Yevtushenko, who "has said all there is to say against his country, against socialism, and against Socialist art" and who has pleased not only "bourgeois public opinion" but most of all, Khrushchev, with his political poems. The fact that Khrushchev's March 8 speech attacked Yevtushenko on much the same grounds is not even mentioned by the Albanians. The moral of it all, according to *Drita*, is that the present imbroglio in the Soviet Union proves the correct position of those leaders (China, Albania) who have remained faithful to Stalin and Stalinism.

In Eastern Europe, most of the Communist regime and Party leaders supported Khrushchev's position by reprimanding their own "liberal" artists and writers and reaffirming the Party's supremacy in such matters. At a writers' conference the East German Communist leader Walter Ulbricht "noted with satisfaction that the speeches made at this conference are substantially identical with the point of view of the Soviet Communist Party as expounded by Comrades Khrushchev and Ilyichev in the Moscow discussions." Czechoslovak Party Chief Antonin Novotny declared: "The Party has the right and the duty to guard the ideological purity of art and to judge the social and educational [i.e. propagandistic] results of artistic activity. . . ." A Bulgarian Party spokesman affirmed that "between hostile

ideologies there can be no peaceful coexistence" and "the winds of skepticism must be stopped." Poland made its own characteristically impudent comment: a Warsaw daily printed the text of Khrushchev's speech alongside a (very favorable) review of a current show of Polish abstract painting.

In Yugoslavia, there has of course been relative artistic freedom, and especially a vigorous modern art movement which, however, Tito has always regarded with a somewhat jaundiced eye. At the Seventh Congress of the Yugoslav People's Youth Organization in Belgrade on January 23, 1963 Tito lined up with Khrushchev in condemning ""ultra-modern abstract art" and berated writers who go too far in their criticism. ("For them Marxism has had its day; they want something new.") He warned that concrete steps would be taken to "correct" the situation, but also promised that "there would be no witch hunt."

At the other end of the ideological spectrum from China, the Italian Communist Party also questioned Khrushchev's attack on the Soviet artists, on rather different grounds, however. Party leader Palmiro Togliatti—in a statement probably aimed as much at the Communist writers in Italy as it was at Moscow—said that "we diverge from the position regarding art taken by the Soviet Union. . . . It is our opinion that tolerance is necessary when one speaks about artistic expression. Nobody . . . can tell a man how to write a poem, how to create music, how to paint." And, most "unorthodox" of all, was the veteran Marxist-Leninist's assertion that "often an artist, belonging to an ideological current judged erroneous by some, can produce a true work of art."

Outside the framework of the Communist movement, Marxist and other left-wing artists and critics were once again confronted with the recurring reactionary reflex in Soviet communism.

The Mexican novelist Carlos Fuentes, a spokesman for the radical left-wing intelligentsia in Latin America, violently denounced Khrushchev's March 8 speech as "old . . . negative . . . useless—reflecting fear of the new, and negative not only because it obstructs the aspiration for creative—that is, peaceful—communication of Soviet intellectual youth; but also because it strains the sympathy of radical literary and artistic movements around the world, and serves to harden the tragic separation of the Cold War." Fuentes repudiated the idea of imposing an official dogma on the arts—prescribing and forbidding themes and attitudes to be taken by artists—on the grounds that the role of an artist and writer must always be to criticize his society, including a Marxist society—for the health of society. The "sanctification of a servile and dogmatic art made it impossible to face up to Soviet reality and to enlist the Soviet intelligentsia in the building of socialism," Fuentes said.

Although there is much speculation and concern about the return to Stalinism implicit in the current crackdown on the Soviet writers and painters, a real reversion to Stalinist methods—that is, terror—has, so far, not begun. There are many measures which can be used to curb the dissident writers: in a country where all publishing outlets and the art market

are completely in the hands of the State, writers and artists can be easily silenced overnight, their only recourse then being to smuggle their works for publication abroad, to write "for the desk drawer" or to circulate works in manuscript among their friends (all of which were common practice in the Stalin era). But there was evidence of hesitancy on the part of the Soviet leadership, and this hesitancy was at least partly a response to the adverse reaction of Communist and left-wing intellectuals abroad. Thus, Yevtushenko's scheduled trip to the West in April was abruptly cancelled after Khrushchev's criticism. But, Tvardovsky, the editor of *Novy Mir*, was allowed to leave early in June for a tour of Italy, where Communist leader Togliatti himself had protested the cancellation of Yevtushenko's visit. Further indication of hesitancy was the publication of another chapter from Ehrenburg's memoirs in *Novy Mir* only weeks after the Soviet Premier's attack on them (however, a two week delay in their publication and the fact that the installment was only half the size of previous installments indicates that this last chapter had been censored). In August at a meeting of European Writers in Leningrad Ehrenburg again asserted that the writer has a right to experiment, and he defended the work of Joyce and Kafka, both of whom are anathema to Soviet authorities. Moreover, a defensive attitude was apparent at a news conference for foreign journalists in May, when Sergei Pavlov, First Secretary of the Komsomol, heatedly denied allegations that Yevtushenko was being persecuted and claimed that the "intransigence" was all on Yevtushenko's side. At the end of September Yevtushenko finally —for the first time since Khrushchev's attack—had some poems published in *Yunost*. Excerpts from a new poem of Voznesensky (whose sins against the regime had always been of an artistic, rather than a philosophical nature) were published in the middle of October in *Pravda*, thus giving official approval to the poem before it came out in complete form in *Znamya*. The movie *Zastava Ilyicha* has not yet been released and is rumored to be undergoing changes. Among other encouraging developments was the publication of Alexander Tvardovsky's lengthy poem, *Vasily Tyorkin in the Other World*, in which afterlife bears a striking resemblance to Stalinist Russia, complete with omnipotent bureaucracy and secret police; and the promise to continue publication of Ehrenburg's memoirs.

These are hopeful signs. The pendulum, in a way typical of the Khrushchev era, has begun to swing back in favor of the rebellious artists. It is also important to note that despite the ferocity of the language of most of the attacks, actual measures against artists were few and half-hearted. And Soviet intellectuals heaved a sigh of relief and quietly congratulated themselves on winning yet another round with the Party dogmatists. They realize, however, that the battle is far from being won. The struggle between the progressives, particularly the young guard, and the reactionaries (or neo-Zhdanovites as they are often called) will go on for quite some time. But at the moment, Khrushchev needs the support of the intellectuals in his effort to modernize the USSR; moreover, he can hardly afford vocal opposition during his current, all-important campaign against China. Still, al-

though improbable right now, the possibility of a return to rigid artistic formulas, and the use of repression, is ever present; and with it, the danger that Soviet literature may be plunged again into the sterility which was its chief characteristic in the Stalin era, and from which it only began to recover in the past decade. But literature will not perish, as it did not under the despotic rule of Nicholas I or Joseph Stalin. Horace wrote in his *Epistles:* "You may drive out nature with a fork, yet still she will return."

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